

# Can we cure cancer with cookies?

MUSCATINE, Iowa – In the three weeks since my diagnosis, it has become painfully clear that I'm not smart enough or organized enough to have breast cancer.

First of all, people who have been told they have cancer have a lot of reading to do. In the beginning, there are the pamphlets and info sheets from the doctors and the American Cancer Society. Then you realize how much information is available on the Internet and it becomes obvious that it would take a month of Sundays to learn everything there is to learn about the causes and cures of this common killer.

The nature of the reading is not fun either. There are a lot of big words and a lot of scary statistics floating around the world of cancer literature, and lately, I'm just not in the mood to do that type of heavy homework.

But then someone will ask me a question about my future treatment or the nature of my type of cancer and when I can't

who forgot to study for the biggest test of her life. There's a lot of information to learn and file somewhere handy. Cancer can really make you feel dumb and overwhelmed all at the same time.

To make my life a little more interesting, I've also had the opportunity to learn a lot about fertility and human reproduction in the last three weeks, too. Although I thought I

somewhat understood the birds and the bees, now that I'm facing the realities of living with an estrogen-fed cancer, my reproductive options have been significantly altered. That's a nice way of saying that it will probably never be a good time for me to be pregnant. And that's a really sad thing for me. Most days it's much harder to face a life of infertility than a life with cancer.

In general, it feels like having cancer is a full-time job of its own because of the challenge of juggling the onset of information as well as the many doctors' appointments, rehab routines, phone calls, insurance policies, visitors and naps.

The good part of this whole experience is that I also have got a lot of cookies to eat, cards to open, and presents to unwrap. Although I try to share my newfound supply of treats, I worry that not sampling each goodie personally could somehow bring me bad cookie karma.

Unfortunately, one of the first lessons I learned about eating my way through my grief was that apparently having a body part removed does not mean cookies suddenly do not have calories. I may be the only mastectomy patient in history who actually gained weight while in the hospital. When I couldn't zip my jeans to come home, at first I felt shocked. Some said my new size may be due to the many fluids being pumped into my body through

anything. In the end, I was grateful for both my cookies and the sweatsuit that could be pulled over my pants.

It's too bad cancer can't be cured with cookies because I'd be well on my way to recovery. Looking back at what I've learned, perhaps the balance of the naps, the cookies and wonderful friends and family seems the best prescription for all of life's owies.

Even as I continue to sort out all the bad news of the past few weeks, the good news in my life continues to be that I live in a community where people care a lot and aren't afraid to show it. They'll bake for you and cry with you. They'll call and they'll clean. They'll come to your home to sing Christmas carols or/and just to sit on your couch and listen to your worries. And for that, and so much more, I'm incredibly grateful.

*Amy Meyer, a Muscatine teacher, foster mom and free-lance writer, welcomes your suggestions, comments and fashion tips. Contact her*

## PERSPECTIVE



**The Good News**  
Amy Meyer